Backlog of connectivity in rural areas

427. SHRI NILOTPAL BASU: Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that there is a huge backlog of connectivity in rural areas and BSNL is almost exclusively trying to address this challenge;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) whether it is also a fact that following corporatisation, the BSNL is forced to shoulder a huge one-time expenditure on one-time settlement of retirement benefits of its employees as well as tax outgo as compared to the erstwhile DoT;

(d) if so, the details thereof; and

(e) Government's proposals to compensate the BSNL to overcome these losses and successfully face the challenge of rural connectivity?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY (SHRI ASHOK PRADHAN): (a) and (b) Yes, Sir. As on 30.6.2003, 5,16,182 out of 6,07,491 villages have been provided connectivity. Circle-wise coverage of village by various operators through village public telephones is given in the Statement (*See* below). BSNL has provide VPTs in 5,05,381 villages as against only 10801 villages covered by all other operators.

(c) and (d) No, Sir. No one-time expenditure is involved. As per Rule 37-A of CCS Pension Rules, the pensionary benefits of employees of Bharat Sanchar Nigam Limited (BSNL) (existing pensioners and those deemed to have retired from the Government service for absorption in BLNL) shall be paid by the Government as per the arrangements and manner specified by the Government. The Ministry of Finance has, however, nettled the entire amount of pension paid through the Demands for Grant of Department of Telecommunications, against the pension contribution receivable from BSNL. BSNL also pays corporate tax and sales tax since its inception.

(e) To compensate for losses on account of rural telephone operation and other socially desirable projects, BSNL has been so far given some concessions by way of reimbursement of licence and spectrum fee and waival of payments of interest on loan and dividend. For 2002-03, BSNL received Rs. 297.23 crores from the USO fund for maintenance of rural telephones. Another pakage of measures aimed at giving financial reliefs

of BSNL during the 10th plan period is under consideration of the Government.

Statement

Circle-wise coverage of VPTs

Sl. No.	Circle	VPTs provided as on 30.6.2003 by BSNL	VPTs provided as on 30.6.2003 by private operators	Total
1	Andaman & Nicobar	198	0	198
2	Andhra Pradesh	23419	1314	24733
3	Assam	18034	0	18034
4	Bihar	38475	0	38475
5	Jharkhand	26270	0	26270
6	Gujarat	11214	4114	15328
7	Haryana	6811	0	6811
8	Himachal Pradesh	16585	0	16585
9	Jammu & Kashmir	4502	0	4502
10	Karnataka	27066	0	27066
11	Kerala	1468	0	1468
12	Madhya Pradesh	37597	465	38062
13	Chhattisgarh	14665	0	14665
14	Maharashtra	31541	2318	33859
15	North East I	3408	0	3408
16	North East II	2452	0	2452
17	Orissa	40435	0	40435
18	Punjab	12687	0	12687
19	Rajasthan	23858	2590	26448
20	Tamil Nadu	17899	0	17899
21	Uttar Pradesh (E)	75965	0	75965
22	Uttar Pradesh(W)	21268	0	21268
23	Uttaranchal	11630	0	11630
24	West Bengal	37306	0	37306
25	Kolkata	437	0	437
26	Delhi	191	0	191
	TOTAL:	505381	10801	516182